

Story 2188 (1999 Tape 15)

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Controlling Hunter Mehmet's Tall Tales

Hunting is an occupation which produces many popular stories. Some of these stories are accounts given by hunters themselves about their own experiences. Many of these accounts are filled with exaggeration. Just as the actual produces stories, so too does the exaggeration. This that I am about to tell you is one of the latter.

Hunter Mehmet sometimes used to exaggerate the overall size of his quarry and the odd features of parts of that quarry -its tail, its ears, its wings. Coffeehouse audiences seemed to accept and enjoy Hunter Mehmet's reports, but he had a teenage son who was embarrassed by them. One day at home the boy said, "Father, why do you exaggerate so much in your hunting stories? Men in the coffeehouses pretend to be interested in your stories and to believe you are telling them. But as soon as you leave, they make fun of your exaggeration. They joke about what they call the lies you have been telling them. Please reduce size of the animals you talk about. From now on, I am

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going to cough aloud whenever your descriptions become impossibly overdrawn. When I do that, please find some way to moderate your descriptions and thus make them more believable."

Hunter Mehmet accepted this arrangement. The next time they set out for a coffeehouse, he reminded his son, "Remember to cough if I exaggerate anything too much." While drinking tea at the coffeehouse, Hunter Mehmet began to describe some of the animals he had hunted most recently "My friends, yesterday I pursued a fox which had the most beautiful fur I have even seen. But the glossiness of its fur was not as striking as the great length of its bushy tail. That tail was at least three meters long, and it may actually have been five." When Hunter Mehmet heard his son cough, he said, "Well, it may not have been that long, but it must have stretched out close to three meters. When the boy coughed again, Mehmet shortened the tail still more. "No, no! I was inaccurate. It really couldn't have been more than one meter in length." When his son continued to cough, Hunter Mehmet said, "Well, in fact, I think now that that tail was this long or that long." As he made these reductions, he held up his hands at shorter

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and shorter distances apart. But the boy continued to cough.

After they had left the coffeehouse, Hunter Mehmet asked his son, "Did you suppose that that fox had no tail at all?"

"I am sorry, Father. Some dust got into my throat and I could not stop coughing.